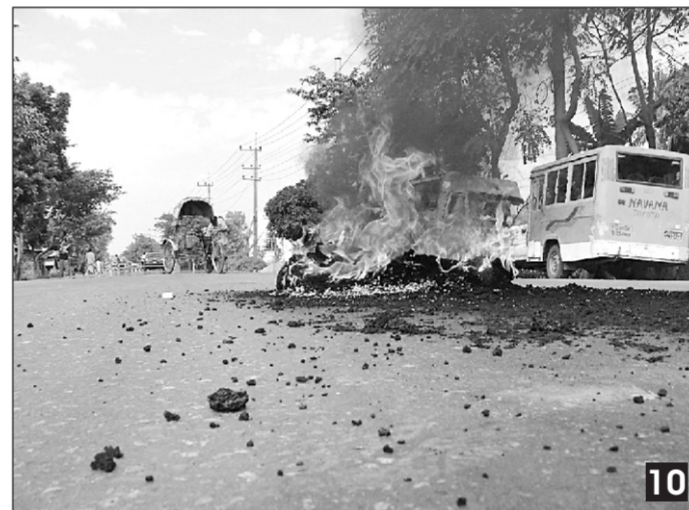


FIRST DAY OF NON-STOP BLOCKADE



1) Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil speaks at a press conference... 2) No long distance coaches left the Gabtoli Bus Terminal... 3) Activists of Sammilita Nagorik Andolon shout slogans... 4) Jubo League activists hold posters... 5) Peshajibi Samannay Parishad takes out a procession... 6) A Rab member searches a handbag... 7) Finding it difficult to get any vehicles... 8) Rab members keep vigil... 9) A rickshawpuller passes a burning tyre... 10) Activists of 14-party alliance burn tyres... 11) Leaders and activists of 14-party alliance march down Dhaka-Mawa road...

President took over as CA due to 14-party's obstinacy: Nizami

Jamaat Ameer Maulana Matir Rahman Nizami yesterday said the president had to take the charge of caretaker chief due to the stubbornness of the AL-led 14-party combine and now they are talking about violation of the constitution. "They (opposition) have now joined the voice of a section of newspapers in our neighbouring country and are saying that the president has violated the constitution," Nizami said in a view-exchange meeting with eminent lawyers at this party office. The Jamaat Ameer said, "The main target of the opposition is to gain political interest making the caretaker government controversial."

He said the opposition parties are trying to block the process of holding the elections under the caretaker government system since they have not been able to take any undue advantage under the system. Referring to the demands of the 14-party combine, Nizami said their stubbornness has put democracy at stake and urged the caretaker government to hold the polls as per the constitution as there is no alternative to election. The Jamaat chief said the lawyers could also play an effective role in maintaining the constitutional process and democratic politics. He also urged the lawyers to play their due role in combating terrorism and anarchy.

1,171 more held

BSS, Dhaka Police arrested 1,171 people and seized some firearms from various parts of the country in the last two days. Among the arrestees, 12 were convicts, including two identified terrorists, 725 were under warrants for arrest and 434 accused in under investigation cases, said a police headquarters press release. Two cases were filed against one person under the Arms act for keeping an illegal revolver and eight bullets. Besides, police seized 390 motorcycles without registration and legal documents in the country-wide drive during this period. Ten people were arrested and 1,156 cases filed against them under the Motor Vehicles Act.

LDP to continue sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) yesterday announced to continue observing non-stop sit-in programme throughout the capital until their eight-point demand, including resignation of the chief election commissioner and neutrality of the chief adviser, is met. "We will withdraw the sit-in programme only when we see the caretaker government taking effective steps to meet our demands and create an atmosphere for holding a free and fair election," LDP President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said at a press briefing at the LDP Presidium Office at city's Baridhara. He also said that they have given enough time to the chief adviser and since the time is over, they have decided to launch agitation for fulfilment of their demands. "We met the chief adviser twice, but nothing has changed," Badruddoza said adding, "no former minister and member of parliament who were involved in corruption in the last five years have been arrested till now."

WP hails people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Workers Party yesterday congratulated people for making the first day of the indefinite blockade a success. Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimol Biswas in a joint statement also urged people to make the 14-party called blockade a success in the next days. They observed sit-in on several city roads yesterday and will continue to occupy different important streets throughout the capital every day until their demands are met, the LDP president added. Col (retd) Oli Ahmed, Maj (retd) MA Mannan and former speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, among others, were present at the briefing.

Call to exempt edn instts from blockade

BSS, Dhaka The Teachers-Employees' Oikya Jote yesterday called for keeping academic institutions out of the purview of the siege programme as the test for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations are going on. Besides, various academic institutions are preparing for admission tests. Chief Coordinator of the Jote Principal Md Selim Bhuiyan, Conveners Kazi Abdur Razzaq, Chowdhury Mugisuddin Mahmud and Moulana MA Latif, Secretary of the Headmasters' Association Md Zakir Hossain, Member Secretary of the Higher Secondary Teachers' Association Md Mahbubur Rahman Mollah in a joint statement made the appeal. They said education is the backbone of the nation and the students are the future leaders of the country. Therefore, it is not expected that the education and the life of students could be affected anyway, they added.

Free, fair polls a must to uphold independence

Says Sultana Kamal BSS, Dhaka Adviser for Science and ICT, Industries, Textiles and Jute Sultana Kamal yesterday said free and fair election is a must to uphold the country's glorious and hard-earned independence. "None can obstruct our way towards rapid development, if we perform our responsibilities by making the best use of our conscience," she said while addressing the officials of the Science and ICT ministry and the departments under it at its conference room here. The adviser urged all to work more sincerely and with devotion to prove that this nation is not terrorist or corrupt. "We must secure a dignified place in the international arena by contributing our best in the progress of modern civilisation," she said. Later, the adviser joined a view-exchange session with the officials of the Ministry of Industry, an official handout said.

CNG turns turtle as pickets chase: One dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT An accountant of Public Works Department (PWD) was killed and a CNG driver injured following a chase by the pickets in the city yesterday. Md Abu Hanif, 55, a PWD accountant of Sherpur district, was going to Gulistan in a three-wheeler from his house at South Sharulia in Demra. At around 10:30am when he was passing through Matuail, the pickets chased the CNG which turned turtle after one of its wheels broke down. Hanif sustained serious injuries while the driver received minor wounds. As Hanif was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) in another autorickshaw, the pickets also attacked it at Jatrabari. Hanif died after he was admitted to DMCH. The CNG driver left the hospital after taking first aid. The family members of Hanif did not file any case in this regard.

Two killed in road mishaps

BSS, Rangpur Two persons, including a housewife, were killed and three others injured in separate road accidents in Rangpur and Dinajpur in the last two days. Police said an unidentified person, 40, was killed at Barodarga on the Rangpur-Dhaka highway under Pirganj upazila in Rangpur on Saturday when a passenger bus hit him there while he was crossing the road. Three persons were injured when a Dhaka-bound coach of Rozina Paribahan from Kurigram and a Rangpur-bound microbus from Bogra collided head-on at Laldighee on the highway in the same upazila. The injured were identified as Suresh Chandra, 38, and Sajal, 35, of Badurtola area in Bogra and housewife Anwara Begum, 33, of village Kishoreganj in Pirganj upazila of Rangpur. They were admitted to a local hospital. In another accident yesterday noon, Arzina Begum, 30, wife of Jasim Uddin of village Dolar Darga in Dinajpur, died on the spot when a pickup van hit her while she was crossing the road at Dolar Darga point on the Dinajpur-Bogra highway under Nababganj upazila in Dinajpur. Police recovered the bodies and filed two separate cases in these connections with Pirganj and Nababganj police stations, the sources said.

Wild elephants kill 1 in Sherpur

UNB, Sherpur Wild elephants held a poor farmer by tusk and trampled him to death and wounded another at a bordering village of Sribordi upazila yesterday night. Babul Mia, 36, was perished under the feet of rogue in Dakshin Kharamura village while Mobarak Ali, 26, rescued by the co-villagers was admitted to the Sribordi Health Complex. Villagers said wild elephants have been coming down from the hilly areas across the border and eating out ripe paddy in the field, which are ready for harvest. The farmers are trying to keep away the elephants by firing hays or logs.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely UNB, Dhaka Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Night temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said in a forecast. Highest temperature 32.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and Sylhet and lowest 17.6 degree Celsius at Dinajpur. The sun sets in the capital at 5.14pm today and rises at 6:13am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.3	20.7	78	74
Chittagong	32.0	23.0	78	70
Rajshahi	24.3	19.5	87	91
Khulna	26.2	20.7	95	87
Barisal	29.0	20.7	77	91
Sylhet	32.0	20.7	62	75
Cox's Bazar	31.8	24.2	88	75

Peace still a distant dream in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul Five years after US-led forces drove the Taliban from Kabul, peace remains a distant dream in Afghanistan with militant attacks at an all-time high, a despondent population and widespread corruption. The violence, in its bloodiest phase since November 2001 with some 1,000 civilians killed this year, results from "the failure of international intervention to stop the cycle of decades of conflict," says the International Crisis Group, a leading think-tank. "The primary error of the Americans and their allies has been to not grant enough troops and resources, which has allowed the return of the Taliban, and resulted in the disillusionment of the people and the unpopularity of the government," added Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani expert on Afghanistan. The Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had only 4,500 members in 2002, all deployed around Kabul. The alliance now commands some 31,000 troops, boosted by 10,000 troops from the US-led coalition that ousted the Taliban five years ago. By comparison Kosovo, which is around 60 times smaller than Afghanistan, played host to 40,000 Nato soldiers after the 1999 bombing campaign against Serbian forces. ISAF's chief, British General David Richards, has himself said that current troop numbers are insufficient to counter the violence that has effectively doubled since 2004 and is now marked by a previously alien phenomenon here -- suicide bombings. The international community's other mistake, according to Rashid, is its failure to press Pakistani authorities to stop allowing their territory to serve as a "refuge for the Taliban." "The Americans were more worried about Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan than they were about the Taliban. But the lack of pressure by Pakistan means that the Taliban have reorganised with the help of Al-Qaeda," Rashid said. The United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to track down Osama bin Laden after the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. Faced with US air raids and the oncoming Northern Alliance forces, the Taliban abandoned Kabul on the night of November 12, around a month after the operation started. But the Al-Qaeda chief remains at large, as does the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Much-needed reconstruction has stopped in several areas because of combat or the withdrawal of Afghan and foreign aid workers, "calling into question some of the modest gains achieved since 2001 such as the return of children to school, especially girls," says US-based Human Rights Watch. To meet the needs of this destitute country, the Nato forces have embarked on building bridges, schools and clinics but "without a state capable of keeping them up, it is pointless," says Joanna Nathan, a Kabul-based analyst with the International Crisis Group (ICG). The group has called for reforms in the Afghan government and for a campaign against endemic corruption to stop disillusioned Afghans from swelling the ranks of an insurgency that the ICG says "is going to last for years." In the eyes of many Afghans the situation is worse than it was five years ago: the cost of living has increased, infrastructure remains deficient and security is still not assured, according to the non-governmental organisation Action Against Hunger. The insurgents are not the only source of violence, according to experts who also point to local warlords who are often implicated in drug trafficking. Afghanistan is the world's leading producer of opium. The situation is particularly bad in the south of the country where the Taliban insurgency and the drug trade are both concentrated. "You would not be able to grow massive poppy fields in regions that were under the control of the central government and foreign forces," Nathan said.